



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

*Volume III.
Number 4.*

April, 1895.

*Whole
Number 24.*

THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

A RECENT TENDENCY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINED

The recent history of secondary school programmes, especially of high school programmes in this country, reveals an interesting and significant tendency. Not many years ago, the secondary school programme consisted of a single course of study, or at most of two courses of study which must be pursued, as laid down, by pupils who desired to graduate and obtain the diploma of the school. The substance of the preferred course of study was Latin, Greek, and Mathematics. The programme usually comprised also a smattering of general history, including the history of English literature, the writing of a few English essays or "compositions", and occasionally political economy and "mental science". This was the Classical Course always pursued by those pupils who were going to college; and to it also most other pupils possessing, or at least claiming to possess, social and intellectual superiority devoted themselves. These pupils thus formed the fortunate circle of the intellectual and social élite; and by means of the classical course those pupils who were not yet of this fortunate circle sought to gain admission to it.

The other course was (and often still is) either like the Classical Course with the Greek left out, and French or German substituted in its place, or both Latin and Greek were omitted and science and modern languages took their places. In the latter case, *i. e.* when both Latin and Greek were omitted their

places were often taken by an ill-assorted aggregate of subjects treated rather briefly, and called "English Branches." Because of the usually scrappy character of the studies substituted for the Classics, and because of the inferior instruction often given in these substituted subjects, the non-classical course was, at first, and for a long time afterwards, almost always in fact as always in reputation, inferior to the Classical Course. It was intended for those pupils who had no hope of going to college, for those who presumably had no "literary aspirations" or had no reasonable expectation of rising above their present social position, and for the hopelessly dull.

In spite, however, of this original and not yet obsolete inferiority, the non-classical course survived ; and it did not merely survive, but it improved in quality, and at the same time multiplied "by fission" as the biologists would say ; so that in place of a single course, parallel to the classical course, two or more such courses came to be recognized. Through such changes the original secondary school programme has become transformed into a number of parallel courses of study—there being in some large schools as many as seven such courses, each one of which leads to graduation and a diploma. Moreover, as already intimated, the partially or wholly non-classical courses have constantly risen in quality through changes in the nature and arrangement of the subject matter, and through improvements in the teaching, until, in some schools, the original inferiority of these courses has wholly disappeared ; and they are recognized as, in all respects, equal to the classical course in dignity and educational value. At the same time, the classical course itself has undergone modifications through the incorporation of science and modern languages, subjects at first regarded as essentially foreign to the scope and meaning of that course.

It appears, therefore, that in the recent history of secondary education, we find a tendency to the multiplication of distinct parallel courses of study, and, to a less extent, to the extension of the scope of the traditional classical course of study ; and

at the same time a growing disposition to regard these courses of study as of more nearly equal value and dignity than heretofore ; or, at any rate, a willingness to believe that all these courses of study, through suitable selection and arrangement of subject matter and through good teaching, can be made of substantially equal efficacy for educational purposes.

Now, it need hardly be pointed out that these changes in secondary education are the result of external demands rather than a development from within; that they have resulted from the more or less reasonable demands of parents usually influenced by but often independent of their sons and daughters, rather than from the deliberate purpose of teachers who have convinced themselves by observation and reflection of the desirability of these changes. The single prescribed course once abandoned has never been reëstablished however, and with the quite general adoption of several parallel courses, through imitation of the larger and more influential schools by the smaller and less important, has also come a desire on the part of all to justify such programmes by an appeal to principles.

I said the demands of parents for two or more parallel courses leading to the diploma of the school were more or less reasonable. I mean that while parents often yielded to the caprice of pupils or to the unwillingness of pupils to do hard work, while insisting on a diploma for such work as the pupils were willing to do, it, nevertheless, often happened that sons and daughters of undoubted intellectual ability failed to profit by the classical course to the extent which their ability and general willingness to work seemed to warrant. Further it was apparent that such boys and girls were not interested in the prescribed work, and often when possible left school for more congenial pursuits. Once out of school they often acquitted themselves in such a way as to leave no doubt of their real ability. Moreover, it appeared to intelligent parents much better that their children should take a course of study of alleged and often confessed inferiority if they could be induced thereby to put forth real effort and develop such intellectual

tastes and capacities as they had, than that they should miss such development in youth altogether by leaving school, or if they remained in school, that they should develop the habit of skilfully evading all real work and run the risk of acquiring a real aversion to all intellectual effort and conquest. Again the apparent remoteness of the subject matter of the Classical Course from all the practical concerns of life, seemed to many intelligent and energetic, but uncultivated parents, to outweigh any alleged and usually admitted general disciplinary value that such a course of study might have ; and so, both on educational and on somewhat narrow utilitarian grounds, the latter much more commonly, courses of study in which the classics should not constitute almost all of the subject matter of instruction were demanded and supplied. In other words it was perceived rather dimly at first, but with rapidly increasing clearness, that individuals differ in their tastes and capacities, and consequent reasonable demands, and that a uniform course of study for all ignored these differences and, therefore, was not adapted to the wants of all the pupils. With the recognition of this fact the public high school gradually ceased its endeavor to impress its preconceived notions of what was good for every individual on the parents and on the pupils, and began to adapt its opportunities to the real or supposed necessities of its pupils and patrons. The latest form of this adaptation is, however, not merely the establishment of several distinct courses of study, one of which a pupil must pursue as laid down, but *choices are permitted within these courses*, and, further, in some important high schools—there are at least three such schools within twenty miles of the State House in Boston—at least one of these “courses of study” *offers a wide range of electives throughout*.

The tendency that we have traced in the recent history of secondary education is, therefore, a tendency to arrange the subject matter of instruction in the form of *suggestive schedules* rather than as mandatory programmes, and to permit each pupil, presumably under wise guidance, to select those subjects or

groups of subjects which are adapted to his wants and tastes.

I purpose now to inquire if this tendency, originally impressed on the schools from without, toward making the work of the secondary school largely elective is justified by sound pedagogical principles, *i. e.*, by valid considerations of the aims and means of education ; and hence whether this tendency should be yielded to, and even deliberately encouraged, or whether it is a pernicious tendency subversive of the real interests of the pupils, and hence deserves to be resisted and overcome.

In the consideration of this question it will be necessary to deal with at least two educational commonplaces, namely, the whole aim of education, and the teacher's attitude toward his profession, which involves a conscious recognition of that aim. I do not hesitate to dwell upon these commonplaces, because they are by no means commonplaces of practice as they are in theory ; moreover, a restatement of them in order to recognize their importance by bringing to light their effect on the future of every human being subjected to their influence can not be superfluous. Our professional life is largely a repetition of commonplaces whose significance we are in danger of losing. To seize this significance rationalizes endeavor, and hence restores the enthusiasm, inspiration, and guidance for fresh effort that is born of a renewed insight.

I have elsewhere pointed out how rare it is to find teachers whose work is determined by conscious aims, and consequently how narrow is the professional horizon of most of them.

I shall not soon forget the surprise with which an intelligent teacher said, not long ago, "an aim, I have no aim in teaching ; that is a new idea !" and another New England teacher, one of the first in his profession, said, in reply to my statement that every teacher's *purpose* must determine the nature and quality of his work, "I have no purpose in teaching astronomy ; I don't know why I teach it !" These teachers did not, of course, represent themselves quite fairly. But they did mean, that beyond the immediate object of inducing their pu-

pils to learn their daily lessons in Algebra, and Latin, and Astronomy, they had no conscious purpose by which their whole activity as teachers was determined ; and specifically, that the choice of these subjects as fit subject matter of instruction was no concern of theirs ; they taught these subjects as best they could, because those subjects were in the course of study which was like other courses of study, or because those subjects were required for admission to college.

It seems necessary, then, to remind ourselves that programmes or courses of study are not divine revelations deserving of implicit adherence. On the contrary, they sometimes suggest a very different origin. But whatever the wisdom or unwisdom of their content and form, it is obvious that programmes or courses of study are not an end in themselves, but a means to an end. They involve, as intimated above, the whole aim of education, and the teacher's attitude toward that aim.

The aim of education is and always will be "preparation for complete living." Preparation for complete living means the acquisition of knowledge drawn from the two fields of all human activity—*man and his experience and achievements, and external nature*; and training to intelligent and productive activity in the use of this knowledge, and to proper enjoyment of it. In the actual work of education we commonly divide this preparation into three periods—primary, secondary, and higher education. We are in this paper concerned with the first two. Too commonly we have failed to attach much significance to this division beyond regarding it as a suitable stratification of our school system with appropriate subdivisions to each stratum, for the convenient handling of masses of children and youth for periodic examination and transfer from one stratum to another.

For this mechanical conception a more intelligent one is, however, gaining acceptance ; namely, that this preparation, though roughly divisible into periods, is an organic process with an unbroken sequence corresponding to the child's advancing

mental, moral, and physical development from one end of school life to the other. This conception naturally leads to a consideration of aims, means, and methods appropriate to different stages of the work, and to the recognition that aims, means, and methods of one sort may not cease abruptly at any point for totally different ones, but that the aims to be achieved, the means to be employed, and the methods used at one stage must merge into the aims, means, and methods appropriate to a later stage. We may, however, for purposes of discussion, separate the chief ends to be accomplished during these three stages from each other, in order to point how they necessarily determine the school programmes and the teacher's conception of his work.

The stage of primary or elementary education may appropriately be called the stage of nutrition. In that stage life is full of wonders. Everything is yet to be discovered. The mind of the child is to be opened and the world is to be let in. The teacher is a veritable magician under whose guidance the pupil is to experience more and far greater delights than those of myth or fairy land, and the treasures discovered are to be his own if he will but exert himself to seize them. The wonderful beauty and structure of organic and inorganic forms ; the marvellous laws of nature ; the hint of system in number and form ; some appreciation of grandeur and beauty in landscape and sea and sky ; the secrets of life as revealed in the form, the structure, the life history, and especially the habits of animals and plants ; these are some of the treasures which the world offers him, and which the teacher both reveals to him and helps him to make his own. Nor is the story of man less attractive at this age than the story of nature. The myths of early days, the heroes of legend, and later the heroes of history, not sovereigns and mere war heroes mainly, but chiefly the men and women who are remembered with affection and respect, for the good, the true, or the beautiful they have wrought. The story of the gradual rise of popular liberty and of national stability so far as these lie within the com-

prehension of the child ; the delights of poetry and of romance—the literature of his own and other tongues that thrill him with pleasure and feed his young imagination with pure and noble ideals—these treasures also the teacher brings within his reach. The artists too, the musician, the painter, the engraver, and the sculptor are called upon to contribute their share to the enrichment of his young life with the purest pleasures. Meanwhile under the teacher's guidance the pupil's tongue and hand are not idle. He learns to employ both in acquiring and in giving expression to the ideas he has gained. Through oral and written speech, through drawing, and through various forms of manual construction, he learns his power over his acquisitions, and while heightening his feeling of intellectual achievement puts into permanent form the thoughts he has had or the forms which he has conceived.

The teacher who looks upon education as the process which thus begins to reveal the world of nature and the world of man to his pupil, who regards himself as the pupil's guide and interpreter, will keenly feel back of the commonplaces of his routine both the responsibilities and the privileges of his vocation. "He will then say of his own accord," says Herbart, "that not he but the whole power of what humanity has felt, experienced, and thought, is the true and right educator, to which the boy is entitled, and that the teacher is given to him merely that he may help by an intelligent interpretation and elevating companionship. Thus to present the whole treasure of accumulated research in a concentrated form to the youthful generation is the highest service which mankind at any period of its existence can render to its successors, be it as teaching or as warning." In other words, the true teacher will realize that the intellectual, moral, and social atmosphere which he creates is the medium of the pupil's dawning intellectual and spiritual life. To economize time and energy, to make the most of native endowments, to stimulate, to guide, restrain, direct, encourage the pupil's own activity with fine feeling and good sense, such is the exalted function of the elementary teacher—such *must be his aim*.

It need hardly be said that such an aim determines a totally different activity from that in which the teacher merely sets a task for the pupil to perform, and then satisfies himself that the pupil has or has not performed it. Such an aim will induce the teacher so to deal with his subject *and his pupil* that although the details of the knowledge presented may be forgotten, the memory of the charm of its novelties and of its beauties skilfully revealed, of the intellectual conquests that it afforded, of the wonderful relations between the different parts of the whole field of knowledge which were discovered, of its availability for the service or for the pleasures of men ; in a word, the many-sided interest which was developed in knowledge and in the varied activities of which a human being is capable will remain as a permanent mental possession.

As yet, however, the mind of the child has only been aroused. It has been touched by life in its manifold forms, and it thrills and pulsates with its own awakening. This has been the purpose, and should be the result of primary education. An orderly presentation of the whole field of knowledge has nourished the child's growing mind, has called into activity his varied powers, and has given him glimpses of fresh fields to explore and greater conquests to achieve beyond. He eagerly seizes on every subject, and enters with zest on every fresh undertaking.

But children are, after all, very unstable creatures. Much of the knowledge and power, and interest of the earlier years is superficial and transitory. The random interest, the restless activity, the manifold impulses of this early stage are to be organized and controlled. Alertness must not be sacrificed ; but interest must glow steadily, choice and action must become deliberate. Stability and concentration must come to characterize the *youth's* mental life as well as alertness and activity.

Now habitual alertness, stability, and vigorous activity, are sure to follow adaptation to individual interests. These individual interests begin to emerge as soon as the pupil's acquisitions arrange themselves into separate classes. As these classes

of acquisitions and pursuits diverge more and more, each of them assumes marked peculiarities. The youth finds himself no longer attracted by every suggested activity, but certain kinds of knowledge, and certain forms of activity have a charm for him which other kinds of knowledge and other forms of activity do not possess. The field of knowledge has become an array of different subjects, each of which has its own peculiar form and content, and its own peculiar mode of treatment. He feels himself, unconsciously at first, but with rapidly-growing consciousness, permanently attracted by some subjects in themselves or through the treatment they receive, and by some forms of activity ; while, similarly, other subjects or other activities are indifferent or even distasteful to him. Moreover, it is no longer possible for him to compass the whole field of knowledge after it has separated into many distinct subjects, even if he were impelled to do so. This gradual selective or elective action of the pupil's mind is as *important* as it is *natural*. It marks the stage during which the pupil emerges from early childhood into later childhood and youth. It deserves the most careful study. It shows that primary education *has* accomplished its purpose. It *has* made the pupil responsive to the varied interests of life. It should, therefore, be welcomed and facilitated, but also guided and directed through wise restrictions.

It deserves to be facilitated because all real activity on which growth depends as contrasted with mere passive receptivity depends on interest. From this time forward, therefore, the pupil's real effort will be reserved for his preferences. If these preferences are discovered and justly regarded in his choice of work, he may through them develop dominant groups of ideas, to which all other acquisitions are referred, and through which all other acquisitions are interpreted—become significant. Through these dominant groups of ideas the organization of his knowledge and thorough achievement are natural and inevitable. Without them, desultory effort, sporadic exertion, half achievement, are sure to determine the nature and quality

of his work. The intellectual flabbiness, and uncertainty, the want of enthusiasm and pleasure in knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge, too often shown by many a high school pupil and even by high school graduates illustrate what is meant. The pursuit of work in accordance with the pupil's preferences must, therefore, be facilitated in order that, under the teacher's guidance, the real quality and temper of the pupil's mind may be discovered, and that on the basis of this discovery he may be led to mental stability, habitual alertness, and vigorous activity. But while the preferences of the pupil thus need to be facilitated, it is also apparent that they should throughout early youth be guided and restricted with the greatest care. Some of the preferences shown by a pupil are sure to be superficial and transitory. Great care must therefore be exercised that caprice, or a chance interest, may not narrow the whole range of the pupil's life. Moreover, the power to attend to the immediately uninteresting for the sake of reaching a remoter interest has to be developed, and hence the pupil may, during the stage under consideration, be wisely required to attend to subjects, and to exert himself, for a suitable time, in ways and at times which are in themselves unattractive or even irksome to him. But before long every subject of instruction and every form of activity in itself, even when preferred by the pupil, offers sufficient opportunity for such will training, and, consequently, as the pupil's real tastes appear they can be yielded to more and more to his own great advantage. Again subjects needed for ethical and social enlightenment on the one hand, and for an appreciative understanding of nature on the other, must not be lightly set aside nor easily abandoned. Further, intensiveness and continuity in the pursuit of individual subjects beyond their barest rudiments and of activities beyond their beginnings are essential to the development of power. Such intensiveness and continuity only can determine whether a pupil has a real or merely a transitory or illusory interest in given subjects. For these reasons the pupil's work in accordance with his preferences

must be carefully guided and restricted. All this requires much intelligent experimenting. Without such experimentation there is sure to be much waste of time and energy, and there may be positive retrogression. Besides it must not be overlooked that bad teaching may produce precisely the same result as uninteresting subject matter. Hence beside the necessity of a properly guarded choice among the different subjects, there is also the incidental implied necessity of a choice among the different teachers. The period for this experimentation is the period covered by secondary education, say from the pupil's eleventh or twelfth to his eighteenth or twentieth year. The pupil's secondary education, therefore, begins before he completes his (present) grammar school course and continues throughout the entire high school period.

During this period, then, there is laid upon the teacher, in addition to the duties described above in connection with the considerations on elementary education, the difficult task of *wisely using the course of study as a means of discovering the pupil and leading him to self-revelation.*

To make such a discovery and revelation possible, flexible programmes with a large range of electives are necessary. Without such programmes it is useless to expect spontaneous effort. Under compulsion pupils respond to external demands only; they know little of the joy of achievement, and of the pleasures of intellectual activity in general. Under compulsion the pupil is prevented from experimenting, and without experimentation it is impossible for him or for any one else to know what he can and what he can not do; what he enjoys and what is distasteful to him. Of course, an indiscriminate or random choosing of certain subjects and corresponding neglect of certain others should not be permitted. To surrender the pupil to his own caprice is as bad as to compel him to adhere to an externally imposed régime. But without the opportunity to choose for himself he never can develop independence of thought and action, moral poise and vigor.

To develop habits of thorough acquisition, it is necessary

that each subject, or group of closely related subjects, once undertaken, if found adapted to the pupil, should be pursued long enough and intensively enough to demand earnest attention to them. It does not require much exertion, and it is no real test of interest or power to skim the surface of a subject with avidity. But to deal with it intensively, to penetrate willingly into its resources and master its difficulties call for real interest and genuine application. And such pursuit of the subjects or groups of subjects will make them substantially equal so far as the development of intellectual habits is concerned, it will accordingly establish their claim to equal dignity and educational value.

The opportunities required for such purposes will be adequately provided, first, when each secondary school determines the amount of instruction which it is prepared to offer in each subject for each year, and then regards the tabulation of this instruction or the so called "courses of study" not as mandatory programmes but, with certain necessary restrictions, as suggestive schedules; and second, when it may also be justly said of those schools that the teachers in them are efficient, kind, and just; and that the general atmosphere prevailing there is inspiring and refining. Efficient, kindly, and just teachers will be found when the community demands them and is ready to pay for and appreciate them. The responsibility for securing such teachers for the secondary schools rests on the superintendents and principals.

Here then we have the answer to the question I proposed. The present tendency, traced in the beginning of this paper toward arranging high school programmes in parallel courses of study, some of them with a wide range of electives throughout is, so far as it goes, in harmony with sound educational principles, and with the real interests of the pupils; it should, therefore, be deliberately encouraged.

Paul H. Hannus

Harvard University